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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of fourteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 18 April 2007 from the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Philippines to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and in relation to the candidature of the Republic of the Philippines for re-election to the Human Rights Council for the term 2007-2010, earlier conveyed to all the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in New York through a note dated 3 November 2006, as well as through the Chair of the Asian Group in October 2006, has the honour to enclose herewith the Philippines commitments and voluntary pledges in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 18 April 2007 from the Permanent Mission of the Philippines to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Commitments of the Philippines in the Human Rights Council

The Constitution of the Philippines enshrines the Philippines' solemn commitment to human rights by devoting an Article on Social Justice and Human Rights, creating an Independent Commission on Human Rights, and declaring it a State policy to value the dignity of every human person and guarantee full respect for human rights. The Philippines is a party to all the seven core international instruments on human rights. Verily, the Philippines has a wealth of experience, both glorious and painful, in the area of human rights, as it struggled to build itself as a democratic and republican State, the first such in the region.

With this history and commitment to protect and promote human rights at the national, regional and international levels, the Philippines is now seeking re-election to the Human Rights Council at the elections to be held by the General Assembly on 17 May 2007. In connection therewith, the Philippines submits these

Commitments and voluntary pledges

1. The Philippines firmly believes that the congruence of domestic and international human rights protection and promotion is a key factor for the advancement of all human rights. If re-elected into the Council, the Philippines will continue to focus on the vital importance of bridging national, regional and international human rights goals, standards and strategies.

2. The Philippines has a long tradition of promoting and protecting human rights in Asia and throughout the world. As a founding member of the United Nations, it worked for the inclusion of "self-determination of peoples" as one of the purposes of the Organization and the addition of the words "or independence" as a basic objective of the trusteeship system which enabled countries under colonial rule to become independent and achieve membership in the United Nations. If re-elected into the Council, the Philippines will continue to play an active role in upholding the rights and welfare of the disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including women, children, indigenous peoples, migrants and persons with disabilities. The Philippines will likewise continue to be a voice for vulnerable groups and will support human rights-based approaches that address their concerns in a comprehensive, positive and practical way.

3. The Philippines will continue to be sensitive to current and emerging human rights challenges, particularly those associated with modern-day dynamics and phenomena, such as globalization, anti-terrorism and security efforts. In this regard, the Philippines will help ensure that the Council is able to effectively address human rights crises, including gross and systematic violations of human rights.

4. In testimony to its firm commitment to the value and sanctity of human life and in the belief that the defence of life is strengthened by eliminating the exercise of judicial authorization to take life, the Philippines abolished the death penalty and will actively campaign towards its abolition worldwide.

5. The Philippines will continue to participate in and promote constructive discussion and cooperation in the Council, with a view to enhancing capacities of States in effectively addressing human rights challenges and ensuring that the Human Rights Council becomes a partner, and not an opponent of States in question, particularly those requesting international assistance in enhancing capacities in promoting and protecting human rights. In this regard, the Philippines looks forward to the timely establishment of the universal periodic review.

6. The Philippines will continue to play an active role in establishing the institutional foundations and mechanisms of the Council.

7. The Philippines will continue to help and assist the Council in promoting constructive engagement with civil society, ensuring opportunities to effectively contribute to the work of the Council.

8. The Philippines will further contribute to improving the work methods and strengthening the mechanisms and systems of special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights in order that they effectively serve the goals of the Council.

9. To effectively complement its work in the Council, the Philippines will continue its leadership role in the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its active participation in the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

10. The Philippines will continue to support efforts aimed at the adoption of a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

11. Recognizing that different faiths, religions and spirituality traditions share many common values and principles which are vital to the building of peaceful communities and societies, the Philippines will continue to promote and support initiatives on inter-faith dialogue, in the context of promoting human rights.

12. Taking into account the importance of the right to development to all human rights, the Philippines will continue to support advancing discussions on the right to development with a view to ensuring its realization.

Regional level

13. Having successfully steered the twelfth Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Summit where the importance of the creation of an ASEAN human rights mechanism was recognized, the Philippines will continue its role as initiator in the establishment of an ASEAN human rights mechanism.

14. The Philippines shall continue to actively pursue its task as the ASEAN focal point in efforts to fight human trafficking and in promoting women's and children's rights, while simultaneously integrating human rights in the issues of international terrorism and transnational crimes, and HIV and AIDS.

15. In recognition of the contributions of migrant workers to the society and the economy of both sending and receiving States in the region, as was emphasized in the ASEAN Declaration on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Migrant Workers, the Philippines will continue to advance the cause of migrant workers.

National level

16. Having ratified all of the seven core international human rights treaties and a number of their protocols, the Government of the Philippines shall strengthen domestic support for the signing and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

17. Having fulfilled its earlier commitment to sign the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the Philippines shall strengthen domestic support for its ratification as well as the signing and ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

18. Having fulfilled its commitment to strengthen the Presidential Human Rights Committee, the Philippines shall support the Committee in fulfilling its mandate to, firstly, act as the primary advisory body to the President on human rights issues; secondly, institutionalize the preparation of treaty implementation reports; and, thirdly, prepare and monitor the implementation of the Government's National Human Rights Plans of Action.

19. The Philippines condemns extrajudicial killings in the strongest terms and, in cooperation with the international and national human rights community, shall continue to strongly address the issue.

20. In line with its commitment to uphold justice and strengthen efforts to address impunity, special bodies, such as the Melo Commission and Task Force Usig, were created to undertake a comprehensive investigation of cases of extrajudicial killings. The Philippine Supreme Court has established 99 special courts to specially and preferentially hear and expeditiously decide on such cases. Furthermore, the Philippine Government has strengthened its witness protection programme and established a Human Rights Office in its armed forces. The Government's strong institutional response to the issue has already resulted in a number of convictions, with many more cases under active investigation and prosecution.

21. As part of mainstreaming human rights in the work of all government agencies and entities, and, building on the Philippines' strength as UNESCO prize awardee on human rights education, the Government will improve access to justice of the poor and other vulnerable sectors of society, including by enhancing training programmes, particularly on women's and children's rights, for judges, public defenders and military and police personnel.

22. The Philippines will continue to strengthen the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines, an independent constitutional body responsible for the monitoring of the human rights situation in the country and investigation of cases of human rights violations.

23. Having presented its combined fifth and sixth implementation reports on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as well as having submitted its consolidated implementation reports on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Philippines shall continue to improve its reporting system and submit more timely reports to the relevant treaty monitoring bodies. The Philippines shall likewise be more active in implementing the relevant concluding observations and recommendations of these bodies.

24. In furtherance of its constitutional policy to promote the right of the people to effective and reasonable participation in governance, the Philippines shall continue its engagement of civil society and other relevant parties to actively utilize the various United Nations human rights complaints mechanisms and shall endeavour to submit timely replies to communications filed under these mechanisms.

25. The Philippines will continue its efforts in instilling a human rights-based approach in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, the right to development and economic and social and cultural rights, as embodied in national development policies, plans and programmes.

26. Having recently enacted the Human Security Act of 2007, the Philippines shall ensure that measures embodied in the law for the protection of human rights are strictly observed.